

## LESSON TWELVE

# HE'S ALIVE!

*"Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said."*

MATTHEW 28:5-6



## REFLECTION

*Easter Sunday* is the day on which Christians worldwide commemorate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. However, for many Easter has become a mere holiday, the significance of which has obscured by secular hype. What was Easter like in your home when you were growing up? What traditions or customs did you observe?

## SITUATION

Jesus had led an extraordinary life, filled with revolutionary teachings and jaw-dropping miracles, but it had ended with a horrific death on the cross. Only that wasn't the end. Matthew, like all the Gospel writers, concluded his account of the Carpenter-turned-King by demonstrating the authority of Jesus Christ over death itself. Matthew ends with a Messiah who is very much alive . . . and eager for the whole world to know it.

## OBSERVATION

*Read Matthew 28:1-10 from the New International Version or the New King James Version.*

### NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

<sup>1</sup> After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

<sup>2</sup> There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as

snow. <sup>4</sup> The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

<sup>5</sup> The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

<sup>8</sup> So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

### NEW KING JAMES VERSION

<sup>1</sup> Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. <sup>4</sup> And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

<sup>5</sup> But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. <sup>7</sup> And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

<sup>8</sup> So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

<sup>9</sup> And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

## EXPLORATION

1. On what day did the women visit Christ's tomb?

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2. What specific supernatural events does Matthew say took place on that first Easter morning?

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3. Whom did the women meet? What did he say?

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4. How does Matthew describe the mood of the women?

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5. What transpired as the women left to find the other followers of Jesus?

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6. What specific instructions did the women receive in each of these encounters?

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## INSPIRATION

The empty tomb never resists honest investigation. A lobotomy is not a prerequisite of discipleship. Following Christ demands faith, but not blind faith. "Come and see," the angel invites. Shall we?

Take a look at the vacated tomb. Did you know the opponents of Christ never challenged its vacancy? No Pharisee or Roman soldier ever led a contingent back to the burial site and declared, "The angel was wrong. The body is here. It was all a rumor."

They would have if they could have. Within weeks disciples occupied every Jerusalem street corner, announcing a risen Christ. What quicker way for the enemies of the church to shut them up than to produce a cold and lifeless body? Display the cadaver, and Christianity is stillborn. But they had no cadaver to display.

Helps explain the Jerusalem revival. When the apostles argued for the empty tomb, the people looked to the Pharisees for a rebuttal. But they had none to give. As A.M. Fairbairn put it long ago, "The silence of the Jews is as eloquent as the speech of the Christians!"

Speaking of the Christians, remember the followers' fear at the crucifixion? They ran. Scared as cats in a dog pound. Peter cursed Christ at the fire. Emmaus-bound disciples bemoaned the death of Christ on the trail. After the crucifixion, "the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders" (John 20:19 NLT).

These guys were so chicken we could call the Upper Room a henhouse.

But fast-forward forty days. Bankrupt traitors have become a force of life-changing fury. Peter is preaching in the very precinct where Christ was arrested. Followers of Christ defy the enemies of Christ. Whip them and they'll worship. Lock them up and they'll launch a jailhouse ministry. As bold after the Resurrection as they were cowardly before it.

Explanation:

*Greed?* They made no money.

*Power?* They gave all the credit to Christ.

*Popularity?* Most were killed for their beliefs.

Only one explanation remains—a resurrected Christ and his Holy Spirit. The courage of these men and women was forged in the fire of the empty tomb. The disciples did not dream up a resurrection. The Resurrection fired up the disciples. Have doubts about the empty tomb? Come and see the disciples. (From *Next Door Savior* by Max Lucado.)

## REACTION

**7.** Do you agree that there is no other compelling explanation for the radical change among the disciples except that they must have seen the resurrected Christ? Explain.

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**8.** In the first century, Jewish women would not have been regarded as credible witnesses. How does this fact lend authenticity to the claim that two women were the first to see Christ alive?

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**9.** Shortly after the events in this passage, the Jewish leaders and Roman guards concocted a plot to deny the story of a resurrected Christ (see Matthew 28:11–15). Why was their story so obviously false?

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**10.** Matthew writes that some of Jesus' followers (and *some* would seem to indicate at least three) struggled with doubt—even though he was right there! In what ways do you find it difficult to trust in Christ?

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**11.** If Christ was able to raise others from the dead, and if he himself conquered death, what are the implications for us as his followers?

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**12.** What final promise do we read that Jesus made to his followers in Matthew 28:20?

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## LIFE LESSONS

Matthew's Gospel, from start to finish, is filled with gloriously good news. *Immanuel* . . . God with us. The sinless one, impervious to Satan's temptations. The messiah-king who offers citizenship in the now and not-yet kingdom of God. The compassionate healer. The ingenious teacher. The almighty miracle-worker. The Lord of the Sabbath. The enemy of false religion. The Son of David. The crucified Savior. The resurrected Lord who possesses all authority in heaven and on earth. The returning Son of Man. Christ is all these things and more. This is our message. *He* is our message!

